



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

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RESOLUTION OF MEXICO'S WATER DEBT ANNOUNCED

Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announced in March that the United States and Mexico have reached an understanding that will effectively eliminate Mexico's Rio Grande water debt by September 30, 2005. Resolution of the water debt has been a top priority for President George W. Bush and Commissioner Duran due to the impacts on the Lower Rio Grande communities in Texas and the ramifications for compliance with the 1944 Water Treaty.

"I am pleased that our diplomatic dialogue with Mexico produced a great benefit for both countries, illustrating a spirit of cooperation that sets the stage for resolving important issues border wide. I want to thank President George W. Bush and the State of Texas for their leadership, commitment, and support in bringing this issue to closure," said Commissioner Duran.

Duran made his announcement March 10 in Mission, Texas jointly with Texas Governor Rick Perry, Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs, and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Chairman Kathleen White. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a similar announcement

earlier in the day during a trip to Mexico City.

The understanding, based on the recommendation of Commissioner Duran and his counterpart, Commissioner Arturo Herrera Solís of the Mexican Section of the Commission, provides for water transfers as well as additional deliveries in order to pay off the entire debt. As of October 1, 2004, Mexico's deficit stood at 716,670 acre-feet. By press time, the debt had been reduced to 212,000 acre-feet.

Based on implementation of the understandings reached, the United States and Mexico will consider that Mexico's water debt is completely eliminated. Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico is to deliver to the United States an annual average of 350,000 acre-feet in the Rio Grande basin in cycles of five years. Since 1992, Mexico has accumulated a water deficit,

which reached a high of more than 1.5 million acre-feet in 2002.

In addition to the deliveries to pay off the water debt, Mexico will continue to deliver sufficient water to meet its obligations for the current water cycle. Mexico has already delivered the minimum annual requirement of 350,000 acre-feet during the first two full years of the current cycle.



Mexican diplomat Enrique Escorza (l) and Com. Duran mark the conclusion of successful negotiations at USIBWC Headquarters.



FULL WATER SUPPLY LIKELY FOR UPPER RIO GRANDE

After seven years of river drought and two years of water shortages, water users in southern New Mexico, the El Paso area, and the Juarez Valley in Mexico expect to receive a full allotment of Rio Grande water in 2005. According to Wayne Treers with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, snowpack in the Upper Rio Grande Basin reached 145% of average by early May. The Bureau is projecting that flows into Elephant Butte Reservoir will be the highest since 1995. Treers discussed the Annual Operating Plan for the Rio Grande Project on May

4 in Las Cruces, New Mexico at a joint public meeting of the Bureau and the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum of the United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC).

Allocation to water users is made after water actually enters the reservoir. Projections are that a full water supply allocation will be made by summer. In 2004 and 2003, water users received less than half of a full supply. In accordance with the Convention of 1906, the USIBWC is responsible for delivering Mexico's Rio Grande allotment.

IBWC APPROVES PLANS FOR INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

U.S. Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran and Mexican Commissioner Arturo Herrera Solís of the International Boundary and Water Commission in April signed the conceptual plans for the new Tornillo-Guadalupe International Bridge located in El Paso County, Texas-Guadalupe, Chihuahua. Approval of the conceptual plans means that project proponents can now proceed with final design and construction drawings. The IBWC approved the plans after verifying that the proposed bridge would not provoke deflection or significant obstruction of normal or flood flows of the Rio Grande.

"I am pleased that we were able to approve the conceptual plans to allow this project to move forward," said Commissioner Duran. "This bridge is important for El Paso County and we will continue to work with the county to advance the project."

Proponents achieved another milestone recently with the issuance by the U.S. Department of State of a Presidential Permit, which is required for all international bridges. To help the project move forward, the IBWC will develop an agreement for demolition of the old bridge. The Commission must also approve final plans for the new bridge.

The existing two-lane bridge, known as the



Mexican Com. Herrera (l) and U.S. Secretary Carlos Rivera sign the bridge plans.

Fabens Bridge, was built in 1938 as part of the IBWC's Rectification Project. Owned by the IBWC, the toll-free bridge is for passenger vehicles only. El Paso County and the State of Chihuahua plan to construct the new bridge 650 yards upstream of the existing bridge. With six lanes and sidewalks, the new toll bridge will handle passenger vehicles, commercial truck traffic, and pedestrians.



DURAN APPOINTS COLORADO RIVER CITIZENS' FORUM BOARD

United States Commissioner Arturo Q. Duran has appointed nine people to serve on the USIBWC's Colorado River Citizens' Forum. Commissioner Duran met with the new board at its May 12 public meeting in Yuma, Arizona and shared his vision for the agency.

Commissioner Duran appointed the following board members:

- Marie Barrett - Citizens' Congressional Task Force on New River/New River Wetlands Outreach Coordinator, El Centro, CA
- James Davey - engineer serving local governments and irrigation districts, Yuma, AZ
- Roger Gingrich - City of Yuma Water Resources Coordinator, Yuma, AZ
- Paul McAleese - International Desalination Association, retired U.S. Bureau of Reclamation engineer, Yuma, AZ
- Brian McNeece - community college instructor, environmentalist, El Centro, CA
- Wade Noble - attorney representing area irrigation districts, Vice Chairman of the Resolutions Committee of the Colorado River Water Users' Association, Yuma, AZ
- Pablo Orozco - Calexico New River Committee Executive Director, Calexico, CA
- Tracy Register - Cocopah Indian Tribe, Environmental Protection Office Director, Somerton, AZ
- Eric M. Reyes - Institute for Socio-Economic Justice, Outreach Coordinator for United Farm Workers, Imperial, CA

USIBWC Yuma Project Manager Al Goff will serve as the agency representative on the board. Board members will serve a two-year term. The USIBWC appointed new board members to replace those whose terms had expired.

"I look forward to partnering with the new board," said Commissioner Duran. "They will play a key role in enhancing the Commission's communication with the community in the Lower Colorado River region."

During his remarks at the Citizens' Forum meeting, Com. Duran commented on the importance of working with the local community to develop projects that serve the interests and needs of all three levels of government -- local, state, and federal.

The CRCF was established in 2003 to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in Yuma County, Arizona and Imperial County, California. The CRCF is intended to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between the USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, government agencies, irrigation districts, municipalities, and other interested parties.

The USIBWC has four other Citizens' Forum Boards located in El Paso, TX-Las Cruces, NM; Southeast Arizona; the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas; and San Diego, CA.



Paul McAleese, Wade Noble, Pablo Orozco, Roger Gingrich, Com. Duran, Tracy Register, Brian McNeece, James Davey, Eric Reyes (l to r)

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